DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 738 PS 030 361

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TITLE Improving School Climate Is Everybody's Business. City-Neighborhood Schools Initiative.

INSTITUTION Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, PA.; Alliance Organizing Project, Philadelphia, PA.

SPONS AGENCY Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.

PUB DATE 2001-06-00

NOTE 60p.

AVAILABLE FROM Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Tel: 215-563-5848; Fax: 215-563-9442; e-mail: pccy@aol.com. For full text: http://www.pccy.org/PDF/improvingschoolsclimate.pdf.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Classroom Techniques; Discipline; *Educational Environment; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; *School Attitudes; *School Community Relationship; *School Safety; Student Attitudes; *Student School Relationship; Teacher Attitudes

IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania (Philadelphia); Philadelphia School District PA

ABSTRACT

Responding to concerns expressed by state legislators, teacher union leadership, the Philadelphia school district, parents, children, and school staff, the Philadelphia Citizens for children and Youth (PCCY) and the Alliance Organizing Project identified perceptions of the current climate in the city's schools and obtained suggestions for improvement. This report represents the second in a series produced as a joint project of PCCY and the Alliance Organizng Project. The PCCY and Alliance Project conducted focus groups, surveys, and interviews with students, teachers, parents, principals, administrators, social workers, counselors, non-teaching assistants, and other school staff. Findings revealed that all non-administration stakeholders wanted to be included more in policy development and more supported in policy implementation. Participants wanted consistency and their decisions to be reinforced by others who were on the same team. They expressed the need for school leadership, improved and clearer procedures, more training and programming, more in-school options for troubled students, and avoiding use of transfers as a way to solve a school's disciplinary problems. Except for the frequently expressed need for more parental involvement and the feeling of parents that their participation was not really desired, there was remarkable agreement expressed on all issues. Nineteen resulting recommendations for the school district include: (1) establishing clear behavioral expectations; (2) implementing policies consistently; (3) improving the school's physical appearance; (4) involving students in school policy implementation; (5) providing professional development support; (6) focusing on unstructured time and places; (7) providing more local school control over school climate decisions; and (8) creating transitional programs for students returning from incarceration or other institutions. Three appendices list the district-wide

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initiatives for ensuring school safety, describe national school safety trends, and detail the survey response results. (KB)

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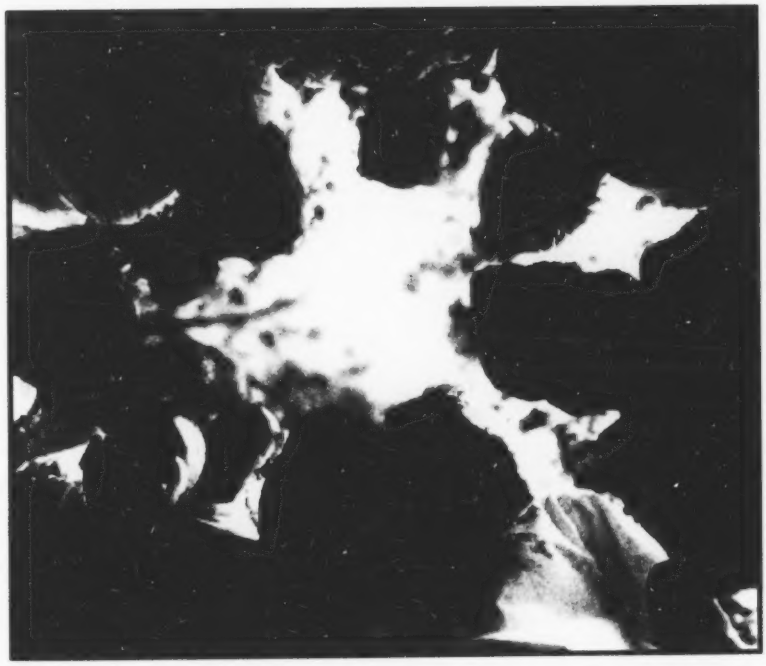
The City - Neighborhood Schools Initiative



Improving School Climate Is Everybody's Business

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The City-Neighborhood Schools Initiative

a joint project of

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

and

The Alliance Organizing Project

June, 2001

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The Organizations

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

Founded in 1980, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) serves as the region's leading child advocacy organization and works to improve the lives and life chances of the region's children. Through thoughtful and informed advocacy, community education, targeted service projects and budget analysis, PCCY seeks to watch out and speak out for the children in our region. PCCY undertakes specific and focused projects in areas affecting the healthy growth and development of children, including after-school, child care, public education, child health and child welfare. PCCY's ongoing presence as an outside government watchdog and advocate for the region's children informs all of its efforts.

The Alliance Organizing Project

The Alliance Organizing Project is a membership-based organization of parents and others in Philadelphia organizing to build power and improve schools so that all children can achieve. AOP reaches these goals through building relationships among all stakeholders, developing leaders, building parent groups, and waging issue campaigns on a local school and citywide level.

Preface

In the fall of 2000, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, the region's leading child advocacy organization, and the Alliance Organizing Project, the region's grassroots parent organizing project, came together to officially build on each other's strengths.

While keeping their own agendas and continuing the coalition efforts with others interested in public education, they formally undertook a project where each group would use its skills and energies to identify and conduct research on issues in public education, conduct surveys, choose topics, strategize about possible actions and jointly adopt recommendations. Each would individually work on implementing the recommendations and each would enhance the other's work.

The groups consulted with members of the community to choose the issues they wanted to explore. The first issue chosen was the teacher shortage, the report, *"Who Will Teach Our Children,"* was released in the winter of 2001. This report, our second joint effort, defines school climate as assuring the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place: an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the school's mission free from concerns about disruptions and safety.

Executive Summary

Improving School Climate is Everybody's Business

Executive Summary: Improving School Climate is Everybody's Business

In this first year of a new century, the quality of public education and the safety of our schools' environment commanded national and local attention. In Philadelphia, the challenge and possible response to safety concerns was expressed by state legislators, leadership of the teacher's union, the School District, parents, children and staff of the schools. As part of the City-Neighborhood Schools Initiative, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) and the Alliance Organizing Project (AOP) interviewed students, teachers, parents, principals, administrators, social workers, counselors, non-teaching assistants and other school staff to identify both perceptions of the current situation regarding the climate in the city's schools and suggestions for improvement.

Overall, we found that students, parents, teachers, principals, and auxiliary staff wanted to be included more in the development of policies and more supported in their implementation. All participants wanted consistency and their decisions to be reinforced by others who were or should be on the same team. They expressed the need for school leadership, improved and clearer procedures, more training and programming, more in-school options for troubled students and to avoid as much as possible using transfers as a way to solve a school's disciplinary problems. For those students who need special attention or another setting or school option, they felt the transfer procedure needed much improvement.

Except for the frequently expressed need for more parental involvement and the feeling of the parents that their participation was not really desired, there was remarkable agreement expressed on all issues. The desire for consistency, clarity, support and enforcement of climate/behavior policies was an overarching theme voiced by all participants even as they also sought the opportunity for school site participation in the policy development. The responses suggest a desire on the part of the students, teachers, staff, parents, principals, administrators, professional and other school and system staff to be, and feel that they are, a part of a team with a mission.

If we as a society could respond to this challenge - we indeed would improve school climate and increase the safety in our schools.

We recommend that the District:

1) establish clear behavioral expectations and implement policies consistently.

2) engage all education stakeholders including school staff, students, parents and community members in the development of a formal site-based safety plan for each school.

3) develop a system for on-going student and parent input, using tip-lines or drop boxes for suggestions.

4) develop an early identification plan for students at risk of violence, with faculty and school councils working together to develop the plan.

5) improve the school's physical appearance. Institute school beautification and clean-up projects.

6) involve the students in school policy implementation through programs like teen courts.

7) reward positive behavior, giving extra privileges to students and/or classes with good behavior records and sponsor school spirit activities.

8) offer violence prevention, mediation, mentoring and relationship-building programs and workshops.

9) provide professional development support in good classroom management through mentors and coaches working directly in the classroom with teachers.

10) focus on unstructured times and places, providing special lunchroom, hall and recess activities.

11) provide more local school control over school climate decisions. Where there is consensus, allow schools to waive system-wide rules.

12) improve and clarify policies for transferring disruptive students.

13) improve the comprehensive support process to assure that students who need services are linked to the help they need.

14) redesign and/or reorganize the usage of buildings to eliminate or decrease the number of unsafe areas.

15) provide adequate, qualified and trained school staff, particularly focusing on providing youth development training to NTA's and security employees.

16) create transitional programs for students returning from incarceration or from other institutions.

17) create alternatives to out of school suspensions.

18) provide adequate art, music, sports and computer opportunities to recognize and encourage different student success in the school. Even in difficult financial times, interested, engaged students save schools money.

19) recognize that smaller is better and act on the recognition. Create smaller schools, small learning communities, smaller classrooms and smaller settings for kids to learn and be safe.

The Challenge

How to Create a Safe School and a Positive Learning Environment

The Challenge: How to Create a Safe School and a Positive Learning Environment

The great majority of public schools in the United States are safe. Nationally, studies suggest that student victimization has decreased, that the percentage of students carrying firearms has decreased, that the number of reported street gangs has decreased and that students feel safer in schools. But "safer" still isn't safe enough, nationally or locally, and a school without violence is not necessarily a school that offers a good learning climate. More is needed. (Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2000)

Schools reflect the community in which they sit and the society of which they are a part. Violent and disruptive incidents occur in rural, suburban and urban schools. As schools and communities struggle to improve school atmosphere and outcomes, they often raid their academic budgets to pay for identification cards, metal detectors, security cameras and school police. In some ways, all these costs exacerbate the problem as teaching and learning resources are diverted to security needs.

In Philadelphia, safety and improved climate are major concerns for educators, parents and students. Too many teachers and students do not feel secure in their schools. As State and City legislative bodies held hearings on the problems of safety in the schools, the teachers' union and the media often focused on the problem. This year, the leadership of the School District of Philadelphia sponsored several meetings concerning school safety, inviting representatives from the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, The Commonwealth Association of School Administrators, and some parents, students, City and civic representatives to explore ways to improve school safety and environment. While these meetings were being planned, a small group of child and education advocates focused on short term steps the schools could initiate with the same goals. These steps emphasized learning and sharing current school best practices, clarifying policies and simplifying procedures for finding alternative programs for troubled youth.

At the same time, The Citywide - Neighborhood Schools Project, a collaborative of Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth and The Alliance Organizing Project, was researching the issue, interviewing parents, students, teachers, administrators and others in the school community to learn about their ideas for improving school climate. This report is the result of that effort.

What We Did

What We Did

Focus Groups and Interviews

We conducted nineteen focus groups with students, parents and teachers and asked them for their insights and ideas about improving school climate and safety. In total, there were approximately 152 individuals who participated in the focus groups with an average of eight people per group.

We conducted nine one-on-one interviews with non-teaching assistants (NTA's) and school police, four interviews with school teachers, ten interviews with principals, five interviews with school counselors and social workers and four interviews with cluster leaders and family resource network coordinators. We asked them for their insights and ideas about improving school climate and safety.

School Safety and Climate Surveys

We distributed surveys in schools. We wanted to find out from students, parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators their sense of school climate, resources and options in their schools. The survey was divided into four sections: involvement of the school community in safety policies, planning and activities; rules, practices and discipline policies; programs during regular school hours; and school safety precautions pertaining to middle and high schools. Respondents chose one of three possible answers: Yes; No or NA (not applicable). In total, there were 220 responses from students, 259 responses from parents, 51 responses from teachers, and 61 responses from people in the "other" category, which included principals, librarians, counselors, school police and other school support staff.

The responses for each of the questions were tallied. The most frequently heard comments and the results of the majority of the surveys are found in the body of the report. For a full analysis of the surveys, see the appendix.

Challenge and Response

Students, Teachers, Parents, Principals, Auxiliary Staff, Family Resource Network Coordinators and Cluster Leaders

Challenge and Response: The Students

While the students differed in their views of several current strategies, they agree on the need for consistency and uniform application of policies, for more input and interaction in their classes and in the development of school policies, for more programs and better staff training, for in-school time-out opportunities with educational support, and for the need for strong principals in the schools.

We asked about metal detectors:

"It makes us feel like we are coming to prison or something. If they treat us like we're in jail, then some kids are going to act like criminals."

"Overall, we need metal detectors because it stops some kids from bringing guns to school."

The difficulty of the topic and the contradictions it stimulates are apparent in some of the quotes from the students. The majority of students in the focus groups expressed feelings that metal detectors detract from the school environment, create a negative tone in schools and serve as a constant reminder of the potential of violence. Nevertheless, most students with whom we spoke believe that metal detectors should be kept in place to deter violence.

Student Survey Results: Seventy-one percent of students surveyed reported that schools require students to pass through metal detectors.

Suggestions for Improvement: The students suggested that metal detectors should be monitored more closely and that the process should be more efficient so kids could get to class on time. Students generally expressed disapproval of random checks, suggesting that if some kids had to be checked upon entering a building, all kids should be checked.

We asked about school uniforms:

"They take away from kids' creativity and freedom to wear what they want, and don't really make anything safer."

"They do help a little bit because kids without uniforms do not belong in the schools."

The students' views on the school uniform policy varied. Some students do not agree with the school uniform policy because they feel that it takes away from their individual rights. These students doubt that requiring uniforms would reduce a majority of the inter-personal conflicts between students.

Yet, many of these same students believe that requiring students to wear uniforms creates a slightly safer environment because people who do not belong in the school are more easily identified.

Student Survey Results: Thirty-nine percent of the students surveyed reported that they are required to wear uniforms or adhere to a dress code.

Suggestions for Improvement: While there is not agreement on the use of uniforms, students have a strong opinion about the need for agreement on a dress code. If schools are to have uniforms, students recommend that everyone be required to wear the same exact uniforms (at affordable prices). Again, there is a basic fairness concern and desire for clarity and consistency being expressed by students about both uniforms and detectors.

We asked about school identification cards (ID's):

"In my school, you can't get in the building without flashing your ID card... it's a good way of keeping out kids who don't belong."

The majority of students with whom we spoke agree that the use of student ID cards (whether they are the cards that are swiped through a machine or those that are flashed as they enter the building) is a good strategy for making schools safer because ID cards help to identify students who do not belong in the building.

Student Survey Results: Seventy-percent of the middle and high school students surveyed reported that they are not required to wear picture ID's or badges.

Suggestions for Improvement: Many of the students with whom we spoke suggest that the use of student ID cards is a safety precaution which is most effective when students are required to wear them in plain sight.

We asked students about non-teaching assistants (NTA's) and school security officers:

"Some of the NTA's at my school are cool with the students and whenever there is a problem, they pull the kids to the side and deal with them before something bigger happens."

"Some of the NTA's and school police act like drill sergeants or something... they are always grabbing on kids and throwing them up against the wall for no reason."

Again, the responses from students varied widely and often contradicted each other. Some of the comments about the NTA's were very favorable: many students reported that the mere presence of NTA's and school police officers make schools safer, that they relate well to students because they are from the community and that they serve as effective mediators of student conflicts. Other students reported that some NTA's are verbally and physically abusive to students, do not enforce school policies consistently, and are not held accountable for their actions by school administrators.

Suggestions for Improvement: The majority of students with whom we spoke suggest that NTA's and school police should be provided with additional training in youth development and psychology and that they should focus less on policing students and more on helping kids cope with problems.

We asked about classroom climate:

"If schools want kids to show respect in the classroom, teachers have to allow students to have their say, and everyone should have to follow the same rules."

Students showed a great deal of consensus on the types of classroom management activities that work best to create a positive learning environment and those classroom practices that create a negative and potentially hostile environment. Students said that effective strategies include: teachers using an inter-active curriculum with more hands-on activities, using visuals aids, and facilitating small group activities. The students provided examples of classroom strategies that create a negative and sometimes hostile environment including: teachers losing patience with students who have difficulty grasping concepts, not allowing for student input into classroom lessons and lecturing all of the time. Students said that the most important quality for a teacher to have is to be caring. A caring teacher was defined as someone who makes an effort to emotionally connect with students.

Suggestions for Improvement: Most students agree that classroom environments could be improved if teachers use interactive teaching techniques, hands-on learning strategies, visual aides, facilitate small group activities, and ask for student input. Students also suggest that some teachers should better understand cultural differences, and suggested sensitivity training. They also recommended that student / teacher forums be created to bring about greater understanding between students and teachers.

We asked students about principals:

"Half the kids in my school see the principal like once all year. When he makes announcements over the loud speaker, kids are like whatever, they don't pay him any attention."

"My principal stands in front of the school when kids come in and when they leave and really tries to get to know students, a lot of us respect him for that."

The majority of students with whom we spoke agreed on a few characteristics that principals should possess in order to promote a safe and positive atmosphere. Students believe that principals need to be highly visible, personable, and carry themselves with a "no-nonsense attitude." According to some students, it is also important for principals to enforce discipline policies, otherwise students would not take any of the rules seriously.

Suggestions for Improvement: Principals need to consistently enforce discipline policies, be more visible and set the tone of the schools.

We asked students about discipline polices and procedures:

"We need to be involved in making our school safer because basically we are the ones who have to deal with all the bad stuff that is going on."

Student Responses Varied on this Topic: Many of the students reported that their schools try to get students involved in planning school safety activities, but most schools need to do a better job of engaging students. A few of the strategies that were noted by students as being effective are teen courts, student contracts, and school committees with student representatives.

Student Survey Results: Fifty-five percent of the students surveyed reported that school discipline practices are reviewed and monitored with students, parents and school staff; 58% of the students reported that schools have a formal process to obtain input on policies related to school crime and discipline; and 63% of the students reported that schools have written polices and procedures in event of major incidents.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need to do a better job of involving students in the planning and implementation of school safety policies and practices.

We asked students about anger management / emotional support programs:

"We need programs and people to talk to - that can help us deal with our issues."

All students with whom we spoke agree that problem solving programs, conflict resolution/ anger management programs, programs dealing with male/female relationships and access to school counselors and social workers are all important components of maintaining a safe and emotionally supportive environment. They clearly expressed a consensus that these programs need to take place (particularly peer mediation programs) in all schools in order to make school environments safer. They also noted that school counselors and social workers are helpful in solving conflicts but need to be more accessible. In terms of violence prevention strategies, many students believe that schools should have an anonymous way for students to report incidents in the school.

Student Survey Results: Fifty-two percent of students surveyed believe that schools offer mediation or violence prevention programs, 48% of students believe that schools have enough counselors and other school staff to deal with discipline issues and 61% reported that recess recreational and enrichment activities are not provided during school. Sixty-five percent of the students surveyed reported that there is no hotline or tipline to report student problems within schools

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should offer more conflict resolution / violence prevention programs and programs dealing with sexuality. Schools should hire more counselors and social workers and provide students greater accessibility to the current counselor and social work staff. Schools should create teen courts and peer mediation options to deal with student conflicts. Schools should provide anonymous tip lines or suggestion drop boxes for reporting potentially dangerous situations or providing ideas to improve school climate.

We asked students about transferring disruptive students:

"Man, I had to go to the accommodation room and they worked me all day long. I'm never acting up in class again."

"Transferring students around doesn't change anything. That's why kids act out in class because people ship them around and they don't feel like anyone cares about them."

Students discussed a number of options within schools that provide alternatives to out of school suspensions and transferring kids between schools. Many students noted in-school suspension programs as a good strategy for dealing with disruptive kids when the proper academic supports were in place.

According to some of the students, accommodation rooms, drop-in centers, and cooling off rooms are also helpful in diffusing potentially explosive situations in the school, but they noted that it is important that the options be available throughout the day. The majority of students with whom we spoke expressed strong feelings against transferring disruptive students. They believe that this practice adds to students' anger and frustration when what is really needed are better supports and more caring adults. Yet, a number of students said that certain kids are going to act out regardless of the supports in place and alternative schools should be an option for those individuals.

Student Survey Results: Sixty-one percent of students surveyed reported that schools offer alternatives to suspensions that include in-school learning opportunities with extra supervision and 50% reported that there are adequate alternative placements for students.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should provide in-school suspension programs with academic supports. Accommodation or time-out rooms should be available for students throughout the day. Alternative schools, or transferring kids out of schools, should be considered as a last resort to dealing with chronically disruptive kids.

Challenge and Response: The Teachers

Teachers spoke of the importance of a stable and adequate school staff, of consistently enforcing the rules, of clarity about the roles in discipline policies, of more adequate programming, of the problematic transfer procedure for disruptive youth and of the need for administrative support, parental involvement and support.

Teachers cite inadequate staffing and high administrative turnover:

"We have gone through two administrative changes that have affected school climate. Last year's model made staff feel appreciated; then the administration changed. This year we feel blamed and criticized; it sets a negative tone in the school."

All of the teachers with whom we spoke noted inadequate staffing as a major barrier to maintaining a safe and positive learning environment. High administrative turnover leads to changes in the way safety policies are administered. Even with a stable school administration, lack of qualified teachers and support staff makes maintaining order extremely difficult. Many teachers believe that it is especially important to consistently staff in-school suspension programs and accommodation rooms. They described these programs, when adequately staffed, as effective alternatives to transferring disruptive students. When asked about the key qualities that the existing staff need to have in order to promote a positive environment, teachers said that showing kids that adults in schools care for them is the most important first step.

Results from Teacher Surveys: Forty-seven percent of teachers surveyed reported that schools have enough counselors and other school staff to help children with discipline-if they are able to concentrate on these responsibilities. Forty-seven percent of these teachers also reported that schools offer adequate alternative placement programs for disruptive students.

Suggestions for Improvement: More qualified teachers, more support staff including NTA's / school police officers (for maintaining order and conducting hall sweeps), counselors (to ensure earlier detection of special need students) and aides to adequately staff in-school discipline options (accommodation / timeout rooms, in-school suspension programs) should be available in schools.

Teachers cite unclear discipline roles, poor safety planning, and inconsistent enforcement of discipline:

"One of my kids came into class thirty minutes late and I sent him to the principal's office to get a pass. The principal brought the student back to my class and told me that the student should have been admitted the first time. This happens often and demoralizes staff."

"The administration created a no-hat policy and issued a memo to teachers, asking them to enforce the policy. However, when teachers began writing kids up for violating the policy and sending them to the office, there was no administrative follow through and kids were being sent back to the classroom. Administrators would walk by students wearing hats in the hallways and not say a word. Eventually, teachers stopped enforcing the polices because they said they did not have administrative support."

The majority of teachers with whom we spoke agree that many discipline problems stem from a lack of enforcement of discipline policies. Part of the problem is that teachers do not consistently write up students for violating policies, but often the problem exists because school administrators do not consistently follow through with policies that they often create. Some teachers said that when students do not consistently face consequences for inappropriate behavior, both students and teachers suffer. Teachers noted that sometimes there are overlapping responsibilities between the principal, small learning community coordinator, and school deans that result in an uncoordinated approach to enforcing discipline policies. All teachers said that the entire school staff, parents and students should be involved with school safety planning. Many teachers believe that schools operate in crisis mode most of the time and do not properly plan ahead for dealing with school safety issues.

Response from Teacher Surveys: Fifty-three percent of teachers surveyed reported that there is a formal process in place to obtain input on policies related to school crime and discipline.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need more planning time for school safety activities that involve school staff, students and parents. Schools need to make a greater effort to reinforce and communicate school behavioral expectations. Examples mentioned were: using student behavior contracts, posting school behavior policies on bulletin boards, announcing the code periodically over the public address system and rewarding students for appropriate behavior. Schools consistently need to enforce school discipline procedures.

Teachers speak of the difficulty of transferring disruptive students:

"The District as a whole has a dysfunctional approach to long-term chronically misbehaved kids. The end result is that good kids or the victims transfer out of class, not the perpetrators."

Teachers with whom we spoke have mixed feelings about policies for transferring disruptive students. On the one hand, teachers believe that part of the reason why some kids are constantly disruptive is because they have no stability in their lives and are not surrounded by caring adults. From this perspective, transferring kids is just adding to the pain and gives the student more reason to behave inappropriately. However, many of these same teachers believe that traditional school settings are not the best option for some chronically disruptive students and that in certain cases, children need to be placed in disciplinary schools or therapeutic settings. All teachers agreed that the process for transferring chronically disruptive students to alternative settings is too cumbersome.

Suggestions for improvement: Schools should have more services and programs available for troubled kids. The school system has to improve and clarify the transfer process.

Teachers cite lack of parental involvement:

"The lack of parental involvement impacts the children's attitudes toward learning. They don't see it [education] as something valued or important because the parents don't either. When parents don't value the educational process, the kids won't."

All of the teachers with whom we spoke agree that more parents need to be involved with the schools if climate is going to improve. They said when parents are not clear on school discipline policies or when they fail to reinforce the policies at home, students do not take rules seriously. At bare minimum, teachers said that parents need to be responsible for providing teachers with updated contact information.

Response from Teacher Surveys: Fifty-one percent of teachers surveyed reported that schools do not provide training or technical assistance to parents in dealing with student's problem behaviors and 45% believe that there are no programs that involve parents in helping to maintain school discipline.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need to put forth a greater effort to get parents more involved in school activities. Examples mentioned were: providing daily reports about student behavior or school safety training with parents, hiring parents as noon-time aides, discussing behavior policies with parents at open houses, back to school nights, and parent/teacher conferences and getting more parents involved in home and school councils).

Teachers feel there are not enough supports to meet social and emotional needs of children:

"At lunch, kids come to my room to play dominos, checkers, and chess and they have a very pleasant time. It is the nicest period of the day and kids govern themselves the way they know they should."

All of the teachers with whom we spoke agree that there needs to be more enrichment and problem solving / conflict resolution programs available to all students. Teachers said that many dangerous situations within schools could be prevented if students are provided with the proper supports and tools to deal with their anger.

Results from Teacher Surveys: Eight-six percent of teachers surveyed reported that schools offer some recess, recreational, and enrichment activities for students during school hours and 75% responded that there are some alternatives to suspension for students. Additionally, 60% of teachers reported that schools offer mediation and violence prevention programs.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need more problem solving, peer mediation, conflict resolution / violence prevention programs and enrichment activities. Schools need more structured activities during lunch periods. Schools need more in-school options for students to "blow off steam" such as accommodation rooms, drop-in centers and socialized recess programs.

Challenge and Response: The Parents

Many parents feel excluded from school safety planning and activities; they feel that the schools do not communicate with them adequately or in a way that encourages their participation. Parents also express concern about schools needing more staff and more programs to deal with youngsters in need.

Parents feel excluded from school safety planning and activities:

"We know we are a part of the solution, but the schools don't see us that way. They just think we're the problem. They don't even think to use us as resources. If they include us from the beginning in planning stuff, then we're real partners and we can help with the plan. But we have to be brought in from the beginning. We run into trouble when they go off by themselves and exclude us and come up with all these policies and then try to shove them down our throats. That doesn't work."

"A lot of times we can't even understand the policies. It's like some kind of Greek code. They need to break it down in everyday terms."

Parents overall do not believe that schools involve them enough in school safety activities. Moreover, many parents are unaware of school safety policies and those who do receive policies believe they are not written in the type of language that all parents can understand.

Parents cite lack of consistency in enforcing school discipline:

"There is no real procedure. Even if there is something written down, there's no consistency and nobody enforces anything. It means something different to every child."

"It depends on the teacher and the situation how they follow the procedure and what they do. There's no specific order of what you do first. You do what you feel is right. That's a problem."

Many parents believe that schools do not consistently enforce discipline policies. Parents believe that this situation needs to change in order to improve situations in schools.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should reach out to ask parents for their input in school safety policies. Schools should inform parents of the rules every chance they get. Policies should be consistently enforced.

Parents cite lack of communication with and from school:

"Communication is the key, and we don't have any at our school."

"Parents need to be notified immediately even over the littlest thing."

Poor communication is another major concern for parents. Some parents said that when their children were involved in altercations in schools and consequently suspended, they did not receive immediate notification.

Results from Parent Surveys: Fifty-five percent of parents surveyed reported that schools have a formal process to obtain input on policies dealing with student behavior; 43% of parents surveyed reported that schools have a program that involves parents at school to maintain school discipline.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should undertake a more comprehensive approach to dealing with school safety. Examples mentioned were involving parents, school staff, students and community members in planning and executing school safety activities. Schools should provide parents with conflict resolution training so they can help their children at home. Policies and procedures should be clearly expressed to parents in a parent-friendly, easy to understand format. Parents should receive immediate notification if their children are involved in any form of altercation or if an incident occurs on school grounds that could be potentially dangerous. In general, parents should be kept aware of their children's behavior through regular reports. Alternatives to traditional discipline methods (arbitration for first time offenses, use of teen courts) should be available.

Parents cite a lack of safety precautions and inadequate school buildings:

"There's not one solution, no silver bullet. It all has to fit together like a puzzle. You shouldn't be able to just walk into a school using any old door. You should have to walk through the main door, sign in, and wear an identification. If you're in a high school, you should have to walk through a metal detector. There should be hall monitors, cameras, school police, NTA's, city police - you name it!"

"Get a new school! This one doesn't have a gym or a cafeteria. There are no fans and it's too hot. The kids want to explode by the end of the day. They're all cooped up in here and can't run around. A new building would help solve most of the problems because there would be more space, a gym, a cafeteria, and things like that."

The majority of parents with whom we spoke agreed that "hardware" safety measures, such as metal detectors, student identification badges, security cameras, and requiring visitors to sign in, are necessary. Additionally, some parents believe that physical deficiencies in schools such as poor ventilation, overcrowding and unsafe areas in the schools need to be addressed.

Results from Parent Surveys: Eighty-eight percent of parents surveyed reported that schools require visitors to sign in before entering the building, 73% of parents reported that access to school buildings and grounds are controlled during school hours, 69% reported that schools require students to wear uniforms. A smaller number of parents reported that schools require students to wear badges or picture ID's and use security cameras (15% and 22% respectively).

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should make sure that major safety precautions are being used consistently. Parents should be involved in the planning and development of policies. School staff should pay closer attention to the physical upkeep of schools.

Parents cite inadequate staffing and student supports:

"There are too many out of school suspensions. There need to be more in-school suspensions instead of just giving kids a day off."

"They should hire more people so the kids have more individual attention in each classroom - like mentors, teachers aides. Kids need more attention, then there will be less problems. They would act out less. It's simple, right? It's what you do at home. They just need someone to listen to them."

A major concern for parents is the overall lack of adequate staffing in the schools. Parents believe that there is a need for additional qualified teachers and more support of staff members to maintain order within the schools.

All parents agree that more programs and supports need to be in place to address students' emotional needs. They believe that anger management / conflict resolution programs, peer mediation programs and counselors are critical, but not universally available in schools.

Results from Parent Surveys: Fifty-three percent of parents surveyed reported that schools have enough counselors and other school staff to assist students with discipline issues. Regarding prevention programs, 55% of parents reported that mediation and violence prevention programs are offered at schools. A smaller number, 45% of parents, reported that schools offer adequate alternative placements for disruptive students.

Suggestions for Improvement: More teachers and support staff, more conflict resolution and enrichment programs are needed.

Challenge and Response: The Principals

We spoke with elementary, middle, and high school principals to find out what barriers stand in the way of maintaining a positive school environment and what recommendations they had for improving the situation.

Principals cite the importance of parental support:

"The key is to keep parents involved in school activities, this takes a lot of time and commitment."

"Often when students are involved in an altercation, their parents are in denial of their wrongdoing. Some parents undermine teachers' and school administrators' authority by yelling at them in the school."

Principals with whom we spoke agree that in order to improve school climate, parents need to become more active or engaged in school safety activities. They noted that school staff needs to do a better job of getting parents involved in home and school councils, planning activities and finding other ways to get parents to volunteer and participate in school activities. Principals also said that parents need to take it upon themselves to become more active in schools and to reinforce school behavior policies to children within the home. They said that a large number of students do not follow school discipline policies because their parents do not take the policies seriously.

Suggestions for Parental Involvement Improvement: Principals should explore strategies to involve parents more in school safety planning activities and home and school councils. Schools should work with parents to create ways for parents to reinforce school discipline policies within the home.

Principals cite the importance of the physical conditions of schools:

"If students walk around and there's trash all over the floor, chipped paint on the walls, and an overall dingy feel to the school, this promotes a negative school atmosphere."

"There are parts of the building that we don't use anymore - they could be trouble."

Principals interviewed believe that schools kept in good physical condition add to a positive environment. They also noted that dark and isolated areas in the school are problems and that entrance/exit doors should be monitored very closely.

Suggestions for Improvement: Simple improvements such as adding extra trash cans around the school, fixing broken doors and widows etc. and making sure that buildings are kept clean are important first steps. Monitoring entrance / exit doors and secluded or hidden areas would make schools safer. School staff should figure out what doors if any could be closed off.

Principals cite the importance of adequate staff and improved training:

" Some of our new teachers are outstanding educators but are just not prepared to deal with some of the community issues that our kids are dealing with. These are issues spilling into the classroom."

"The bottom line is if we don't have enough teachers or school security people to maintain order, learning can not take place."

Some of the principals feel that they should not have to choose between police officers or NTA's and teachers. They said that the District budget, not the school budget, should provide the security force. Principals also cited the need for additional staff members including qualified teachers, NTA's, school police officers, noontime aids and counselors. They also noted that staff members should receive ongoing training to meet the emotional needs of children and to plan strategies for ensuring safety during unsupervised times such as during lunch periods and between classes.

Suggestions for Staff Training Improvement: All staff members should undergo school safety planning and implementation sessions. Principals need to have a strong, visible presence in the school and make an effort to personally get to know students. Principals need to increase the number of conflict resolution, enrichment and tolerance programs within schools.

Principals fault unclear discipline policies and inconsistent follow-through as making the challenge more difficult:

"We don't get enough support from downtown when we try to be consistent."

"If we are to enforce discipline policies fairly and consistently, we need all students to have to follow the same rules."

Principals expressed the need for students and parents to have a clear understanding of behavioral expectations. They also stressed the importance of all school personnel reporting violations of discipline policies to whomever deals with discipline issues in the school. They expressed the need for immediate follow-through on enforcing polices.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools have to establish clear behavioral expectations for students. Schools should explore the use of student/ parent/ school contracts. Schools should provide swift response when a discipline policy is violated. Schools should develop a comprehensive approach to school safety planning that involves students, community members, parents and school staff.

Principals cite cumbersome student transfer procedures:

"Hours of paperwork are required for this process [transfer process] and there is just not enough time to complete all the paperwork and perform regular duties."

"When kids come back from institutions, we need to have more programs and supports for them."

All of the principals with whom we spoke agree that the process for transferring disruptive students is cumbersome and drawn out. They also spoke of the special needs of kids who were returning from institutions. A few principals noted that high numbers of foster children and special education students require special attention. They commented on the difficulty transferring special education students. They said that the transfer process needs to be simplified in order to provide some students with alternative school settings that could best meet their academic and emotional needs. Principals also noted that because the process is confusing and time consuming, appropriate actions sometimes are not even explored.

"Sometimes it feels like policy is driven by law suit avoidance rather than best educational interests of children."

"Let me be responsible for treating all kids fairly and consistently in my school - the climate is ruined if some kids seem to be treated differently."

Suggestions for Improvements: The system needs to simplify and shorten the process for transferring students. The schools should develop more clarity and challenge inconsistent application of the rules. Schools and the system should develop transitional programs for youth returning from institutions. The system needs to put greater focus on preventive measures such as anger management programs for students, incentives for positive behavior, and greater school spirit activities and programs.

Challenge and Response: The Cluster Leaders and Family Resource Network Coordinators

Cluster leaders and Family Resource Network (FRN) Coordinators cite inadequate staffing and planning:

"The key components to establishing a safe learning atmosphere are to reduce the size of our schools and classes and to hire the most caring and competent teachers."

"The key to providing a safe learning environment for students is for schools to involve everyone on their staff in the planning of school climate activities to ensure a coordinated approach to dealing with this issue."

Cluster leaders and FRN coordinators spoke of inadequate staffing and overcrowded classrooms and schools as major issues that need to be addressed before a positive and safe environment can be provided. They also stressed the importance of everyone on the staff, as well as students and parents, being involved in the planning and execution of school safety activities. They recognized that school staff, students and parents need to undergo training on how to provide coordinated and effective school safety activities.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need additional teachers and support staff. Schools need to involve school staff; parents and students need in-service training and planning activities around school safety activities. The size of schools and classrooms need to be reduced.

Cluster leaders and FRN coordinators cite cumbersome process for connecting kids to services and transferring disruptive students:

The process for transferring students and linking them to services and placements in therapeutic settings was frequently cited as problematic. The cluster leaders with whom we spoke are not strong advocates for transferring students and believe that much work needs to occur to provide more supports for students in schools. They did agree however, that the traditional school setting is not appropriate for all students.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should shorten the processes for transferring disruptive students and those in need of therapeutic settings. Schools should increase the opportunities for supports and social services in or near schools.

Cluster and FRN leaders urge additional programs and supports for students:

The cluster and FRN leaders with whom we spoke feel that a key to improving school safety is providing a comprehensive set of in-school and after-school programs. In terms of in-school supports, cluster leaders mentioned: in-school suspension programs, accommodation or time out rooms, and peer mediation programs as effective strategies. After-school options including problem solving and conflict resolution programs, programs dealing with tolerance, mentoring programs and programs focusing on male and female relationships are also viewed as important to improving school climate.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need additional programs and supports both in school and after-school for students. Examples mentioned were: anger management / conflict resolution programs, programs emphasizing tolerance and enrichment activities.

Challenge and Response: Auxiliary Staff - Non-Teaching Assistants and School Safety Officers

Auxiliary staff and NTA's cite inadequate staff and lack of training:

Overall NTA 's and school security officers believe that more staff is needed in order to maintain a safe environment. They also believe that everyone needs additional staff training. They expressed concern about administrators not respecting the opinions of staff and teachers not appearing to respect students.

"When students don't feel respected, they will act out."

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools need to hire more staff and provide additional training to all school staff members. School staff needs to enforce behavior policies at all times. NTA's and school police need to take more initiative when it comes to school safety and contact parents directly when students behave inappropriately. Parents need to be kept abreast of their children's in school behavior.

Auxiliary staff expresses the need for more parent cooperation:

There were a number of comments suggesting that parents need to be more involved in activities within schools and assume more responsibility for their children's actions. They said that parents need to support decisions made by teachers and school administrators regarding the enforcement of school discipline policies.

Suggestion for Improvement: More parent involvement in school safety activities is needed.

Auxiliary staff expresses the need for more programs and supports:

Everyone commented on the fact that more supports and programs are needed for students. The majority of the people that we spoke with mentioned the need for conflict resolution programs and peer mediation programs.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should provide more violence prevention and conflict mediation programs. Schools should provide more peer mediation options (teen counseling, teen court). Schools need stronger partnerships with the community; work with local colleges and universities to gain access to more volunteers and programs.

Auxiliary Staff and NTA's report on poor working conditions as a factor:

Some of the NTA's and school police officers commented on the poor conditions under which school staff and students are expected to function: overcrowding in lunchrooms and classrooms, not enough ventilation, too much heat. These conditions have an adverse effect on school climate and safety. They reported that the inconsistent response to excessive lateness and absenteeism makes it difficult for schools to function properly.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools must address physical barriers: under-used parts of the building, too many doors, large class size and large schools, overcrowding, and poor ventilation. School leadership must address both staff and student's lateness and absenteeism.

Challenge and Response: School Counselors and Social Workers

The counselors and social workers note the inadequacy of emotional supports:

"Schools just do not place enough emphasis on meeting children's emotional needs. These issues must be addressed before any type of learning is going to take place."

"Transferring students from school to school is not the solution to the problem, in fact it is often the uncertainty and lack of stability in children's lives that contributes to their disruptive behavior to begin with. We need to get at the core issues that are affecting the children and find ways to support these children and met their emotional needs within the school setting."

All of the counselors and social workers with whom we spoke agree that schools must place a higher priority on meeting student's emotional needs. Instead of only providing counseling services when students are in crisis, students should receive on-going assistance to deal with difficult family and community issues. People with whom we spoke agree that less time should be spent on making it easier to transfer disruptive students out of school and more time should be spent on implementing preventive measures to support students before they act out. Transferring students may just add to the children's problems, they reasoned.

Suggestions for Improvement: The schools should have more counselors and/or social workers. The schools should utilize more preventive mental health support services for students. The schools should implement time out options or "cool off" rooms for students and offer more conflict mediation / anger management and peer mediation programs.

Social workers feel that the comprehensive student support process (CSP) is too burdensome:

The majority of counselors and social workers with whom we spoke find major flaws in the CSP process (The CSP is a team approach to planning and service implementation for individual students). Although the overall CSP concept is important, they believe it takes too long to secure outside services and placements in alternative, therapeutic settings. The schools' long process (involving the principal, teachers, and parents before certain outside services can be accessed) often complicates an already difficult situation.

Suggestions for Improvement: The CSP process must be improved; the number of steps must be shortened for students to access certain services. Communication between staff and parents must be improved to ensure that all of the steps within the current CSP process are completed quickly and efficiently. School staff needs to do a better job of implementing individualized service plans to help students readjust into the classroom when they return from partial hospitalizations programs or other therapeutic settings. Schools must provide more outreach and follow up with parents about mental health options available to students, so that parents and schools can work collaboratively to assist students.

Counselors and social workers note the need to focus on unstructured times and places:

Counselors and social workers agree that schools do not place enough emphasis on ensuring student safety during the unstructured times of the day including outside recess, the lunch period, and in-between classes. These are the times when many conflicts occur and there is often very little supervision of students.

Suggestions for Improvement: Schools should structure indoor and outdoor recess activities facilitated by teachers, noon-time aides and volunteers. Schools should hold hall sweeps and better monitor hallways in between classes.

Social workers and counselors join auxiliary staff, principals, and parents in expressing concern about the physical problems with schools:

Everyone reported that schools need to better address physical building concerns such as overcrowdedness, under-maintained classrooms, inadequate heating and cooling, poor ventilation, bathrooms in poor condition and under-used areas.

Suggestions for Improvement: Each school should create some way of looking at the physical needs of the building, deciding what might be done in the short term and what needs and priorities should be identified for long term improvements.

Conclusion

Improving School Climate is Everybody's Business

Conclusion: Improving School Climate is Everybody's Business

Each of us is a stakeholder in creating safer schools for our kids, for their faculty, for their families, for their neighborhoods and for all of our future. We've listened and read and looked around and heard ideas about how to improve the situation.

As with other important issues, we found some of the answers complex and contradictory. People believe it is important to have both system-wide rules and to develop their own code of conduct at local schools. People feel that by requiring metal detectors, security cameras and more security officers we are making schools feel like prisons. At the same time, some of those very same people said they feel safer as a result of these safety precautions and that safety is essential for a good learning environment. Most people feel that security is everybody's job and yet they want a point person who is really responsible. And many teachers and administrators expressed dismay about the difficult process of transferring kids out of a school and at the same time, expressed the view that in most cases, transferring was not an answer for the child or the school system. In general it was heartening that above the din and disappointments, most of the staff, the parents and the students are not about blaming - but about building a better system.

We thus come to the recommendations with more optimism than we started with and more respect for the complexities the issue presents. We choose system-wide consistency and site-based decision-making, we choose programmatic changes and common sense, we choose improved transfer procedures and more in-school options, we choose on-going feedback and efficacy and clarity; we choose more staff and more training - even in tight budget times. We choose short term and long-term strategies; we look for something new and often find some best practices in our own schools.

As we identify recommendations, we note the critical role of school leadership in developing and maintaining a good school climate.

The District must develop, support and assist principals in establishing an atmosphere that values and involves school staff, students and parents and the communicates clarity and consistency in policy implementation.

We recommend that the District:

1) establish clear behavioral expectations and implement policies consistently.

2) engage all education stakeholders including school staff, students, parents and community members in the development of a formal site-based safety plan for each school.

3) develop a system for on-going student and parent input, using tip-lines or drop boxes for suggestions.

4) develop an early identification plan for students at risk of violence, with faculty and school councils working together to develop the plan.

5) improve the school's physical appearance. Institute school beautification and clean-up projects.

6) involve the students in school policy implementation through programs like teen courts.

7) reward positive behavior, giving extra privileges to students and/or classes with good behavior records and sponsor school spirit activities.

8) offer violence prevention, mediation, mentoring and relationship-building programs and workshops.

9) provide professional development support in good classroom management through mentors and coaches working directly in the classroom with teachers.

10) focus on unstructured times and places, providing special lunchroom, hall and recess activities.

11) provide more local school control over school climate decisions. Where there is consensus, allow schools to waive system-wide rules.

12) improve and clarify policies for transferring disruptive students.

13) improve the comprehensive support process to assure that students who need services are linked to the help they need.

14) redesign and/or reorganize the usage of buildings to eliminate or decrease the number of unsafe areas .

15) provide adequate, qualified and trained school staff, particularly focusing on providing youth development training to NTA's and security employees.

16) create transitional programs for students returning from incarceration or from other institutions.

17) create alternatives to out of school suspensions.

18) provide adequate art, music, sports and computer opportunities to recognize and encourage different student success in the school. Even in difficult financial times, interested, engaged students save schools money.

19) recognize that smaller is better and act on the recognition. Create smaller schools, small learning communities, smaller classrooms and smaller settings for kids to learn and be safe.

Making it Happen

School Staff, Students and Parents

School Staff and Students are Making it Happen

Mentoring Student-to-Student

Audenreid High School - *Each One Teach One Program* - This mentoring program was created to match at-risk Audenreid high school students with at-risk elementary school students within the Cluster. The program provides academic and conflict resolution training to high school students, which they use to provide emotional and academic support to younger students. The relationships formed between the mentors and mentees often extend beyond the classroom because the students live in the same neighborhoods.

Rewarding Students for Positive Behavior

Cooke Middle School – *Golden Attitude Club* – Students apply for membership which is based on recommendations from parents and teachers concerning students demonstrating respectful, responsible and reliable behavior. Students who belong to the club receive a laminated gold card which they wear around the neck. Students who participate in the club are provided with special privileges such as traveling hallways without passes and other perks including bowling and skating parties. Membership points are built up through good behavior which translates into more benefits. Approximately 300 students are currently part of the Golden Attitude Club.

Teaching Tolerance Through Literature

Solis Cohen Elementary School - A few years ago, school staff visited the Wiesenthal Institute in Los Angeles and received training in strategies for teaching tolerance through literature. Solis Cohen has incorporated the tolerance curriculum in fourth and fifth grade social studies and language arts classes.

Having Students Be the Judges

Simon Gratz High School -*Teen Court* - Students who are charged with a level one offense plead their case in front of a jury of their peers. Everyone involved in the process including lawyers and witnesses are students of the high school. The program has been an effective strategy for empowering students and improving the overall school climate.

Providing Emotional Supports

Stetson Middle School - *Social Skills / Problem Solving Club* –The club meets daily. Students talk with each other about issues that are concerning them and everyone in the group including a counselor offers solutions. This has been an effective way to identify students early who are in need of extra emotional supports.

Parents are Making it Happen

Creating a Structured and Socialized Recess

Kelly Elementary School - Parents at Kelly researched strategies for providing safe and organized recess activities for students, raised money for supplies for the program, and helped train school staff on how to manage the program. Before each lunch period, students are provided with colored wristbands designating which of the four areas that they can participate in "Kingball", basketball, relay races, and jump rope and other quiet activities. The program has created a safer school environment.

Creating a Comprehensive Safety Plan

Pickett Middle School - In an effort to improve school climate at Pickett, parents created a campaign to develop a comprehensive safety and security plan for the school in partnership with the principal, teachers, and non-teaching staff. Over an 8-week period, parents waged an intensive listening campaign to gather everyone's suggestions for the creation of a comprehensive plan, conducted dozens of individual meetings with teachers, ran hundreds of safety surveys with parents, teachers, students, and community folks and conducted focus groups of parents and teachers. The plan that resulted will be presented to the school community for approval and implementation.

Beautifying the School

McKinley Elementary School - Parents created a mural campaign in an effort to involve parents, students, and the entire school community in an uplifting school improvement project. Parents at McKinley partnered with the City's Mural Arts Program and secured funding for the creation of an indoor mural at the school. The mural, which greets everyone as soon as they enter the school, serves as a symbol of the beauty that can be created when everyone works together to improve climate within schools.

Maintaining Order in the Lunchroom

Edison High School - Parents at the school worked in collaboration with the school faculty and staff to improve the lunchroom atmosphere. Students now must show their ID cards to gain access to the cafeteria; they are not permitted in the lunchroom when they should be elsewhere. It took several years for students to consistently carry their ID cards at all times, but their use has significantly improved school safety and the overall climate within Edison.

Appendix

Appendix A - District Wide Measures for Ensuring School Safety

The District has instituted various academic, emotional, and social supports for students. The following are a few of the initiatives:

Community Partnerships

The District has partnered with community agencies to provide violence prevention, peer mediation and drug prevention programs for students. Here are a few partners with whom the District works to improve school safety.

Philadelphia Anti-Drug/ Antiviolence Network - Works on the street and in the schools to calm hot situations, provide hands-on support and assistance.

Philadelphia Health Management Corporation - Facilitates programs for schools throughout District including the Peacemakers and I Can End Violence programs.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) Program – Administers and implements a nationally recognized violence prevention program.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound - Provides a number of neighborhood based violence prevention initiatives.

Physicians for Social Responsibility - Facilitates programs based on bullying prevention and anti-firearms initiatives.

Local Police Districts - The District has improved the communication between law enforcement and schools. The Sheriff's Posse is one strategy used to promote a more positive police image to students. Some local police districts are developing strategies to assist students who have witnessed crimes.

Good Shepherd Mediation Program – Provides conflict resolution training and support services to schools.

Dealing with Truancy

The School District, the City and partner agencies and organizations work together to combat truancy. Last year, about 40,000 students were absent from school without an excuse on any given day. This year the number has dropped markedly.

Police Collaboration Program - The District partners with law enforcement agencies (Philadelphia Police, SEPTA Police, Temple University Police, and Philadelphia Housing Authority Police) to reduce truancy by returning truant students to school.

Decentralized truancy courts - Through a collaboration between the School District of Philadelphia, Family Court, and the Department of Human Services, satellite truancy courts connected to social services are held closer to the school and community, after a student has been truant for 25 days. This allows students' teachers and family members to become more involved in preventing further truancy.

Training for Safe Schools

Safe Corridor Programs - Volunteers provide students with monitored safety routes to and from schools. The Family Resource Network, the City of Philadelphia, and Operation Town Watch provide training and technical assistance to schools looking to establish these programs. Currently 70 sites have safe corridors programs.

Safety / Crisis Management Plan - School staff are trained in implementing these plans to help staff to effectively cope with violent events in every school.

Meeting Students' Emotional Needs

Behavioral Health Services -Twenty clusters have formal relationships with behavioral health providers in order to provide supports and services to students. Many schools have social workers, or special counselors to assist.

Comprehensive Support Process -This system of supports is designed to ensure that students' academic, social, personal, and emotional needs are met. When students are in need of services, a team comprised of the students, their parents, teacher, counselor, principal, and nurse helps to develop a support plan that is individually tailored to help the student.

Other Strategies to Improve Safety

Metal Scanning - Fifty-two high schools throughout the District have metal detectors to ensure that weapons are not brought into the school.

SWIPE Card System - Many high schools issue swipe cards to students which tracks attendance and prevent strangers from gaining access to the school.

Video Security Systems - Video cameras have been installed within middle and high schools to improve security. Currently 62 schools have this system installed.

Exterior Door Program - This program has removed pull handles on exterior doors, which has made it more difficult for trespassers to enter school buildings.

Beeper Program - City Police Districts are provided with beepers to distribute to police officers that are assigned to answering calls for assistance from schools in their area. This program has helped to speed up the response time for calls for assistance.

For more information about these initiatives contact the School District of Philadelphia Office of School Safety at 215-299-7936

Appendix B - National School Safety Trends

Small Schools and Classes

The 1998 *Violence and Discipline Problems in Public Schools Report* published by the U.S. Department of Education provided evidence supporting one of the key elements to providing a safe environment for school children - small school size. The report found a direct link between school size and discipline problems.

Zero Tolerance Polices

Zero-tolerance policies are administrative rules that are intended to address specific problems associated with safety within or around schools. The current trend in zero tolerance policies stems from the 1994 Gun - Free Schools Act, which required states to legislate zero-tolerance laws or risk losing federal funds. In response, various states have developed their own policies to meet the local needs of schools (Martin, 2000).

- 94% of schools reported zero tolerance policies for firearms.
- 91% had policies for weapons other than firearms.
- 88% percent of schools had polices for drugs.

School Uniforms

Many parents, teachers, and school officials have come to see school uniforms as one positive way to increase school safety and to reduce discipline problems. Uniforms are seen by some as a strategy for instilling student discipline, helping students resist peer pressure, and helping school officials recognize trespassers who enter the school.

Many large public school systems - including Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Miami, Memphis, Milwaukee, Nashville, New Orleans, Phoenix, Seattle and St. Louis have schools with either voluntary or mandatory uniform policies (www.ed.gov)

Hardware Security Measures

Nationwide, schools took a number of precautions to keep school secure. Here are a few of the key precautions being taken by many schools around the country. The indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2000 Report suggest:

- Closed campus policies prohibiting students from leaving school grounds during lunch periods (80%).
- Drug sweeps - primarily in middle and high schools (19%).
- Daily use of metal detectors (1%).

Appendix C - School Survey Response Tallies

PCCY School Survey Response Tallies

1) Provide an orientation and/or a printed code of student conduct to students and parents?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	101 / 46%	98 / 44%	21 / 10%
Parent Response	180 / 70%	55 / 21%	24 / 9%
Teacher Response	40 / 78%	10 / 20%	1 / 2%
"Other" Response	45 / 74%	8 / 13%	8 / 13%

2) Review, revise, or monitor school-wide discipline practices and procedures with parents, students, faculty and administration?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	122 / 55%	80 / 36%	18 / 9%
Parent Response	168 / 65%	68 / 27%	23 / 8%
Teacher Response	35 / 69%	11 / 21%	5 / 10%
"Other" Response	44 / 72%	12 / 20%	5 / 8%

3) Involve students in resolving student conduct problems?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	127 / 58%	79 / 36%	14 / 6%
Parent Response	184 / 71%	48 / 19%	27 / 10%
Teacher Response	35 / 69%	11 / 21%	5 / 10%
"Other" Response	39 / 64%	18 / 30%	4 / 6%

4) Have a hotline or tipline for students and parents to report problems?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	65 / 30%	143 / 65%	12 / 5%
Parent Response	85 / 33%	138 / 53%	36 / 14%
Teacher Response	11 / 22%	34 / 67%	6 / 11%
"Other" Response	19 / 31%	22 / 36%	20 / 33%

5) Have a formal process to obtain input on policies related to school crime and discipline?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	128 / 58%	76 / 35%	16 / 7%
Parent Response	142 / 55%	84 / 32%	33 / 13%
Teacher Response	27 / 53%	19 / 37%	5 / 10%
"Other" Response	35 / 58%	13 / 21%	13 / 21%

6) Provide training or technical assistance to parents in dealing with students' problem behavior?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	93 / 42%	113 / 52%	14 / 6%
Parent Response	112 / 43%	104 / 40%	43 / 17%
Teacher Response	17 / 33%	26 / 51%	8 / 16%
"Other" Response	35 / 57%	20 / 33%	6 / 10%

7) Have a program that involves parents at school helping to maintain school discipline?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	99 / 45%	107 / 49%	14 / 6%
Parent Response	137 / 53%	85 / 33%	37 / 14%
Teacher Response	22 / 43%	23 / 45%	6 / 12%
"Other" Response	30 / 49%	24 / 39%	7 / 12%

8) Encourage teachers to escort students to and from classes?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	153 / 70%	60 / 27%	7 / 3%
Parent Response	174 / 67%	64 / 25%	21 / 8%
Teacher Response	39 / 76%	9 / 18%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	48 / 79%	10 / 16%	3 / 5%

9) Require teachers, administrators, and other school staff to model appropriate anger management and conflict resolution techniques?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	96 / 44%	99 / 45%	25 / 11%
Parent Response	151 / 57%	64 / 25%	44 / 18%
Teacher Response	42 / 82%	7 / 14%	2 / 4%
"Other" Response	43 / 70%	10 / 16%	8 / 14%

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10) Have written policies and procedures in the event of major incidents?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	139 / 63%	62 / 28%	19 / 9%
Parent Response	178 / 69%	50 / 19%	31 / 12%
Teacher Response	43 / 84%	5 / 10%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	46 / 75%	9 / 15%	6 / 10%

11) Require visitors to sign or check in?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	182 / 83%	35 / 16%	3 / 1%
Parent Response	230 / 88%	21 / 9%	8 / 3%
Teacher Response	47 / 92%	2 / 4%	2 / 4%
"Other" Response	55 / 90%	4 / 7%	2 / 3%

12) Control access to school buildings and grounds during school hours?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	116 / 53%	93 / 42%	11 / 5%
Parent Response	190 / 73%	53 / 21%	16 / 6%
Teacher Response	39 / 76%	8 / 16%	4 / 8%
"Other" Response	50 / 82%	9 / 15%	2 / 3%

13) Require students to wear uniforms or enforce dress code?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	87 / 39%	120 / 55%	13 / 6%
Parent Response	179 / 69%	67 / 26%	13 / 5%
Teacher Response	35 / 69%	13 / 25%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	44 / 72%	10 / 16%	7 / 12%

14) Use one or more security cameras to monitor the school?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	50 / 23%	154 / 70%	16 / 7%
Parent Response	57 / 22%	144 / 56%	58 / 22%
Teacher Response	2 / 4%	39 / 76%	10 / 20%
"Other" Response	11 / 18%	39 / 64%	11 / 18%

15) Provide telephones in most classrooms?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	179 / 81%	28 / 13%	13 / 6%
Parent Response	203 / 78%	29 / 12%	27 / 10%
Teacher Response	45 / 88%	3 / 6%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	44 / 72%	10 / 16%	7 / 12%

16) Offer recess, recreational, enrichment, and leisure activities for students during school?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	73 / 34%	136 / 61%	11 / 5%
Parent Response	221 / 85%	18 / 8%	20 / 7%
Teacher Response	44 / 86%	5 / 10%	2 / 4%
"Other" Response	39 / 64%	12 / 20%	10 / 16 %

17) Offer mediation or violence prevention, conflict resolution programs?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	114 / 52%	88 / 40%	18 / 8%
Parent Response	144 / 55%	59 / 23%	56 / 22%
Teacher Response	31 / 60%	11 / 22%	9 / 18%
"Other" Response	34 / 56%	15 / 24%	12 / 20%

18) Offer in-school alternatives to suspensions and/or expulsions that provide children with a learning environment with extra supervision and support?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	134 / 61%	71 / 32%	15 / 7%
Parent Response	161 / 62%	50 / 20%	48 / 18%
Teacher Response	38 / 75%	10 / 19%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	38 / 62%	7 / 11%	16 / 27%

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17) Offer mediation or violence prevention, conflict resolution programs?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	114 / 52%	88 / 40%	18 / 8%
Parent Response	144 / 55%	59 / 23%	56 / 22%
Teacher Response	31 / 60%	11 / 22%	9 / 18%
"Other" Response	34 / 56%	15 / 24%	12 / 20%

18) Offer in-school alternatives to suspensions and/or expulsions that provide children with a learning environment with extra supervision and support?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	134 / 61%	71 / 32%	15 / 7%
Parent Response	161 / 62%	50 / 20%	48 / 18%
Teacher Response	38 / 75%	10 / 19%	3 / 6%
"Other" Response	38 / 62%	7 / 11%	16 / 27%

19) Have enough counselors and other school staff to help children with disciplinary and/or behavior challenges?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	106 / 48%	98 / 44%	16 / 8%
Parent Response	137 / 53%	85 / 33%	37 / 14%
Teacher Response	24 / 47%	23 / 45%	4 / 8%
"Other" Response	37 / 61%	12 / 19%	12 / 20%

20) Offer adequate alternative placements/programs for disruptive students?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	110 / 50%	87 / 40%	23 / 10%
Parent Response	117 / 45%	87 / 34%	55 / 21%
Teacher Response	24 / 47%	23 / 45%	4 / 8%
"Other" Response	28 / 46%	19 / 31%	14 / 23%

21) Require students and visitors to pass through metal detectors?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	42 / 19%	155 / 71%	23 / 10%
Parent Response	35 / 13%	85 / 34%	139 / 53%
Teacher Response	3 / 6%	14 / 27%	34 / 67%
"Other" Response	12 / 20%	16 / 26%	33 / 54%

22) Close the campus for most students during lunch?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	45 / 21%	141 / 64%	34 / 15%
Parent Response	29 / 11%	74 / 28%	156 / 61%
Teacher Response	6 / 11%	7 / 14%	38 / 75%
"Other" Response	8 / 13%	15 / 25%	38 / 62%

23) Perform random sweeps for drugs or weapons?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	57 / 26%	134 / 61%	29 / 13%
Parent Response	34 / 13%	76 / 29%	149 / 58%
Teacher Response	2 / 4%	15 / 29%	34 / 67%
"Other" Response	10 / 16%	19 / 31%	32 / 53%

24) Provide school lockers to students?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	177 / 80%	28 / 13%	15 / 7%
Parent Response	70 / 27%	50 / 19%	139 / 54
Teacher Response	9 / 18%	7 / 13%	35 / 69%
"Other" Response	23 / 38%	5 / 8%	33 / 54%

25) Regulate book bags?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	40 / 18%	159 / 72%	21 / 10%
Parent Response	44 / 17%	76 / 30%	139 / 53%
Teacher Response	1 / 2%	15 / 29%	35 / 69%
"Other" Response	8 / 13%	5 / 8%	33 / 54%

26) Require students to wear badges or picture ids?	Yes	No	N/A
Student Response	45 / 20%	153 / 70%	22 / 10%
Parent Response	38 / 15%	80 / 31%	141 / 54%
Teacher Response	3 / 6%	13 / 25%	35 / 69%
"Other" Response	13 / 21%	14 / 23%	34 / 56%

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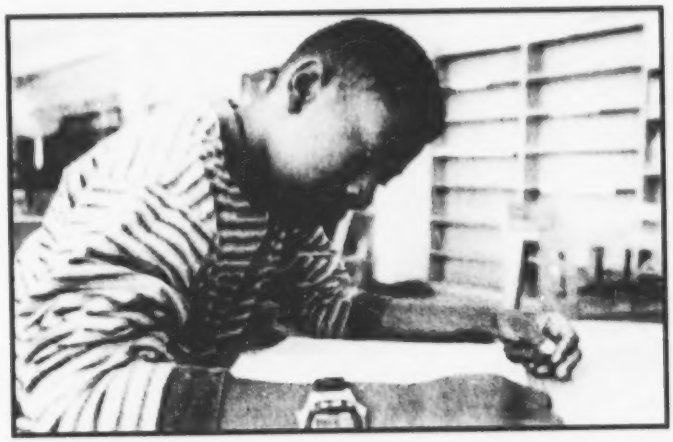

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Acknowledgments

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A Joint Project of Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth and The Alliance Organizing Project

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We are grateful for the assistance of all of the cluster leaders, family resource network coordinators, principals, students, teachers, counselors, social workers, non teaching assistants, school security personnel, and community members that participated in our interviews, focus groups, and surveys. We also wish to thank the leadership of the Commonwealth Association of School Administrators and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. A special thanks goes to all of the student groups who were involved with our project: Asian Americans United, City Wide Youth Agency, Congresso de Latinos Unidos, Philadelphia Student Union and Youth United for Change. Additionally, AOP wishes to thank their parent leaders, teachers, administrators and community partners at the following schools: William McKinley Elementary School, John Welsh Elementary School, William Hunter Elementary School, Julia DeBurgos Middle School, Edison High School, John B. Kelly Elementary School, Clarence Pickett Middle School, Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School, and Germantown High School.

This project has been funded be a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the operating funds of both organizations.

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